UNESCO Mobile Learning Week: Concept Note

Date: 18-22 February 2013
Location: UNESCO, Paris, France

Background

In December 2011, UNESCO held its first Mobile Learning Week (MLW). This event initiated important conversations about how mobile technologies and mobile phones in particular can be used to improve educational access, equity, and quality. The event which included an invitation-only expert group meeting (attended by 30 participants) and an open-invitation symposium (attended by about 100 mobile learning practitioners, researchers, education specialists, industry partners, and government officials) allowed participants from around the world share valuable insights about the educational capabilities of mobile devices. Building on the success of this inaugural event, UNESCO is pleased to announce plans to host a second MLW in February 2013.

The objective of the 2013 event is to better understand how increasingly ubiquitous, affordable, and powerful mobile technologies can help UNESCO Member States achieve Education for All (EFA). As the UN agency tasked with coordinating EFA, UNESCO is committed to investigating how information and communication technology—of which mobile devices are the most widespread—can help further progress toward the six EFA goals agreed to by 164 countries at the 2000 World Education Forum.

MLW 2013 will highlight three particular EFA objectives: 1) improving levels of adult and youth literacy; 2) strengthening the quality of education; and 3) achieving gender parity and equality in education.

As such, MLW 2013 will be anchored in three themes: **Mobiles for Literacy, Mobiles to Support Teachers and Promote High-Quality Education, and Mobiles for Gender Equality in Education**. These themes will be animated by the deliberation of three specific questions:

- How can mobile technologies support literacy development for children and adults?

- How can mobile technologies support teachers and their professional development in order to improve the quality of education delivered to students?

- How can mobile technologies support gender equality in education and extend opportunities to women and girls in particular?

Themes

The three defining themes of MLW 2013 stem directly from EFA goals. They are also consistent with UNESCO's overarching education agenda.

Mobiles for Literacy

According to the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, approximately 793 million adults lack basic literacy skills, almost one fifth of the world's adult population. Nearly two-thirds of these people are women and most live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Literacy levels for millions of children are also disturbingly low. As in the adult population, illiteracy disproportionately affects females and is concentrated in specific geographic regions.

UNESCO is committed to understanding how mobile devices—either alone or in combination with other information and communication technology (ICT) and education initiatives—can help eradicate illiteracy in both children and adult populations. The symposium will provide valuable input into the planning and implementation of mobile learning literacy projects. This input will be of special value to UNESCO because the organization plans to launch a program in 2013 that uses mobile technologies to help people in developing countries learn to read and write.

Mobiles to Support Teachers and Promote High-Quality Education

The need to train high-quality teachers is urgent. In order to meet the EFA goal of providing universal primary education, the world needs to train and employ an additional 5.4 million teachers by 2015. Compounding this numerical challenge are concerns surrounding teacher quality. Data collected by the UN has shown that a large number of teachers are unqualified or underprepared to meet the educational demands of the twenty-first century. Far from being evenly distributed, teacher shortages and deficits in teacher quality are most severe in communities confronting other difficulties, including high unemployment, poverty, unreliable infrastructure, and political instability.

Conversations about ICT in Education sometimes overlook the key role played by teachers in learning processes. For this reason, UNESCO wishes to explore, directly rather than as an afterthought, how mobile technologies can (or might) support teachers and contribute to their professional development.

Therefore the symposium goals for this theme are to explore how mobile technologies can help teachers improve the quality of education and share specific policies and practices that can enable progress in this area.

Mobiles for Gender Equality in Education

For every 100 boys in school in Afghanistan there are just 66 girls. In Somalia gender inequality is even more severe, with only 55 girls in school for every 100 boys. Despite important progress in gender parity, educational opportunities for men and boys and women and girls are often inequitable. Had the world achieved gender equality at the primary level in 2008, there would be an additional 3.6 million girls in school today.

While the primary global challenge with respect to gender parity is making education more accessible and inclusive of women and girls, increasingly men and boys are not taking advantage of educational opportunities at the same rate as females, especially at the secondary and post-secondary level. The 2012 UNESCO World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education explains that "whereas the challenge of gender equality was once seen as a simple matter of increasing female enrolments, the situation is now more nuanced."

In light of this data, UNESCO hopes to understand how mobile technologies can help ensure that all people—women and men, girls and boys—have full and equal access to education of good quality.

In addition to gender gaps in education, a gender gap also exists in the ownership and use of mobile devices. On average, fewer women than men own mobile phones in low- and middle-income countries. This gap is primarily attributed to the total cost of ownership of mobile devices, technical literacy, and cultural barriers that discourage or prevent some women and girls from owning or using mobile technology. The symposium goals for this theme are to explore how some of these challenges can be overcome to ensure that women and girls have full access to mobile learning opportunities.

Activities

To engage the themes and questions detailed above, MLW 2013 will:

- Convene mobile learning experts, practitioners, researchers, industry partners and government representatives to facilitate the sharing of innovative mobile learning initiatives, best practices, and research.
- Provide a forum for dialogue and networking so that the opportunities and challenges for mobile learning are fully discussed and interrogated.
- Launch the UNESCO Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning.

A planning committee, led by UNESCO and made up of partner organisations, will oversee the development of the programme and planning of the event. Given the focus on mobility, the programme will accessible from mobile devices (e.g. www.eventmobi.com) and the polling of questions during symposium and feedback on sessions will be managed via mobile devices In addition, a prize may also be awarded for the best mobile learning initiative. The prize will not be officially sponsored, like the UNESCO L'Oreal Women in

Science Prize, but less formal and awarded during the MLW (ideas on a jury versus audience vote will be discussed).

Programme and format of the week

The MLW will consist of the following events:

- **Symposium on Mobile Learning (open)**
  18-19 February, Paris
  This two-day conference constitutes the backbone of the MLW and will feature keynote speakers, demonstrations of mobile content and technology, and thematic breakout sessions.
- **Senior Policy Makers' Forum (invitation only)**
  20 February, Paris
  UNESCO, in partnership with the GSMA, will host an invitation-only meeting of high-level government officials to discuss issues relating to mobile learning and policy.
- **MLW Webinar (open)**
  21-22 February, virtual
  The Webinar will allow people outside Paris to discuss topics related to mobile learning. It will be moderated by leading thinkers in the field of ICT in education. Selected mobile experts will present their projects and will field real time questions from online participants.

Symposium on Mobile Learning

This year there will be plenary as well as break-out parallel sessions. Speakers could include implementing partners and government officials from the four UNESCO project countries (Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan and Mexico).

Plenary:
- There will be five plenary sessions: one each for the opening and closing of the event, and one for each themed track. The plenaries should inspire and challenge the participants.
- Keynote speakers for the plenary sessions will be selected by UNESCO and the planning committee. Keynote speakers will deliver short (20 minutes), provocative presentations.
- One of the plenaries will include the launch of the UNESCO Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning
- The plenary sessions will be live video-streamed (webcast) so that participants who are not able to attend in person in Paris can follow the event.

Break-out sessions:
- For the three themes there will be smaller, more interactive and participatory break-out sessions made up of presentations and panels.

- Presentations: A call for proposals to present will go out. Proposals by applicants will be selected to present research findings and case studies. Some presenters will be invited by UNESCO and the planning committee.
- Panels: Panellists will either be selected or invited to participate. Panels will be focused: less PowerPoints, more discussion.

UNESCO MLW Webinar

UNESCO will host a one and a half day online webinar similar to the [Mobile Learning Webinar](#) held 14-16 March 2012 which attracted 7,000 participants. Five or six mobile learning specialists will give virtual presentations and participate in discussions with the online audience. Although presentations will be screened on Friday, the webinar platform will be open and active for the full Mobile Learning Week, as well as remain online afterwards.

Walking Gallery

During the 2011 symposium a central hallway was transformed into a "walking gallery." In this space exhibitions showcased recent developments in mobile technologies and mobile learning. Between programed events, symposium delegates visited the walking gallery and met with exhibitors from a wide range of companies and organizations, including Nokia, Commonwealth of Learning, Intuition, iLearn4Free, ICTP (International Centre for Theoretical Physics), SK Telecom, ISTE, mEducation Alliance, Alcatel-Lucent and France Telecom (Orange). The Walking Gallery will again be a part of the 2013 symposium.

Expected participants

120 participants are expected including:
- Policy makers (especially from four project countries)
- Ministries of Education
- Departments of Education
- Teacher Training Institutes
- Mobile learning practitioners and researchers with projects and data to share
- Project managers, teacher and stakeholders from UNESCO partner projects
- Education specialists wanting to engage with mobile learning
- Industry stakeholders who can partner on mobile learning projects

Important dates

- July-August 2012: Secure key partners
- September 2012: Call for presentation proposals, invite keynote speakers, invite sponsored participants

- November 2012: Review proposals, registration opens
- January 2013: Promote event and final preparations
- February 2013: UNESCO Mobile Learning Week

Partners (limit 4) - US$30,000

UNESCO is actively seeking four partners to sponsor and support MLW. Sponsoring and supporting the event will allow partners to develop a close working relationship with UNESCO as well as benefit from the exposure provided by the event. By becoming a sponsor, each organization will become an integral member of the MLW planning committee. As well as providing active input into the organization of the event, sponsors will have valuable and open access to leading policy makers as well as practitioners at the event.

Benefits include:
- Organisation's name and logo prominently displayed as a partner on all MLW 2013 communication materials
- Prominent display of organisation's banner at the event
- Official announcement of your partnership in the Opening and Closing Plenary presentations
- Guaranteed exhibition space in the Walking Gallery
- Participation in the planning committee of the event
- Possibility of organizing a pre-conference workshop in the main programme
- Designation of speaker for a presentation (please note presenter or chairperson can only appear once in the main programme)
- Designation of delegate to chair a session (please note presenter or chairperson can only appear once in the main programme)
- Sponsorship for up to five practitioners from developing countries

UNESCO is the only United Nations agency that hosts dedicated annual events on mobile learning that draws together academia, technologists, commercial stakeholders and governments to engage with mobile learning from a global perspective. Whereas most events combine a general view of ICT in education, MLW will focus primarily on mobile learning and its unique features. Given that UNESCO is a global organization made up of 194 member countries, it offers a truly worldwide perspective on this topic. Since UNESCO hosts member country delegations at its headquarters in Paris and has such a broad range of members, it is perfectly positioned to convene an event such as MLW that brings together policy makers as well as practitioners.

Marketing
UNESCO will launch an extensive marketing campaign for MLW to provide maximum publicity and visibility to the event and its sponsors. The UNESCO ICT in Education team will be responsible for the marketing campaign and UNESCO staff will actively participate in the promotion of the event.

Communication materials will include:

- News articles and updates featured on
    - UNESCO website
    - UNESCO Education sector website and newsletter (EduInfo)
    - UNESCO ICT in Education website
    - Website of partners
- Press release for UNESCO website, UN agency websites, media studios, etc.
- Brochure
- Poster
- Dedicated web portal specifically for the event on UNESCO's website
- Emails sent to stakeholders for event updates and reminders
- Twitter and Facebook updates on UNESCO and UNESCO ICT in Education social media feeds

Outreach for Participants/Donors
- Utilize a proactive approach to reach out to past participants.
- Use communication campaign to recruit new participants.

Contact Information
For information regarding sponsorships and/or exhibitions, please contact us at mlw@unesco.org.